

# Washington State Patrol Media Release

**Chief Lowell M. Porter**

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## **Office of the State Fire Marshal State Fire Marshal Mary Corso**

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **Arson Awareness Week Focuses on Youth Firesetting**

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) announced that the theme for this year's Arson Awareness Week is "Juvenile Firesetting: The Preventable Arson" and is being held May 2-8 this year.

State Fire Marshal Mary Corso reports that the crime of arson has the highest rate of juvenile involvement of all other crimes. In Washington State, 63% of all arson arrests were children under 18, with nearly 80% of these ages 15 or younger with more than 9% under the age of 10. Juvenile firesetters continue to account for a disproportionate share of arson arrests according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and USFA National Fire Data Center statistics and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Report.

Nationally, juvenile arson and youth-set fires have resulted in over 40,000 incidents annually – causing 300 deaths and 2,000 injuries and an additional \$300 million in property damage.

Fire Marshal Corso states, "Fire in the hands of children destroys—regardless of a child's age or motivation. In Washington State, juvenile-set fires caused 21 fire deaths in the last five years. Most of the lives lost are those of the very children setting the fires."

In Washington, "Fire Stopper" organizations in 13 counties provide firesetting intervention services in their communities. In addition to fire departments, these groups involve the police department, mental health professionals, school system, children's hospitals, social services, and the media.

The goal of this year's Arson Awareness Week is to focus public attention on youth firesetting and juvenile arson. It is time to push the message that over 50% of all fires are set by children under the age of 18. By drawing people's attention to the staggering statistics about youth/juvenile firesetting, we hope to expand the resources and support necessary to reduce or end this crime.

***The Office of the State Fire Marshal is a bureau of the Washington State Patrol, providing fire and life safety services to the citizens of Washington State, including inspections of state-licensed facilities, plan review of fire protection systems and school construction***

***projects, licensing of fire sprinkler contractors and pyrotechnic operators, training Washington State's firefighters, and collecting emergency response data. For additional information, you may visit our Web page at [www.wsp.wa.gov](http://www.wsp.wa.gov) and then click on "State Fire Marshal."***

For additional information, regarding youth firesetting, visit the Washington State Patrol's Office of the State Fire Marshal Web page at <http://www.wa.gov/wsp/fire/firemars.htm> or contact your local fire department.

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